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Tim W Hayes 02/15/2007 03:26:42 PM From DB/Inbox: Tim W Hayes

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Text:

UNCLAS SENSITIVE ANKARA 00316

SIPDIS
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ACTION: POL
INFO: CONS DAO TSR PMA ECON DCM AMB RAO FCS PA MGT

DISSEMINATION: POL /1
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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000316

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: Scenesetter for the Visit of CODEL Dicks to Turkey

(U) Sensitive but unclassified - please protect accordingly.

¶1. Summary: Your visit comes at a critical period in the U.S.-Turkey bilateral relationship as the government grapples with continued PKK terrorist attacks from northern Iraq, fears that Iraq's instability will spread beyond its borders, the aftermath of the Dink murder, a potential U.S. congressional resolution on Armenian genocide, and how to find a balance between international and domestic priorities on Iran. All this comes against the backdrop of an important election year here in Turkey. Turks in and out of government predict that a genocide resolution will severely damage our bilateral relations and feed the flames of nationalist sentiment on the eve of elections. End summary.

Armenian Genocide Resolution

¶2. (SBU) Contacts from across the political spectrum in Turkey warn us that the passage of an Armenian Genocide Resolution (AGR) in either house of Congress will provoke a harshly negative public reaction here, one that will be magnified in this election year. (Parliament elects a new President in May, and parliamentary elections will be held by November.) That any AGR will be non-binding and have no concrete effect on official U.S. policy toward Turkey will not matter. In the context of already strong public disapproval of U.S. policies in Iraq, Turkish officials will have to confront an outpouring of public anger at the U.S. should an AGR pass.

¶3. (SBU) The French experience may be illustrative for us. Following the French Assembly vote in favor of a law criminalizing denial of the Armenian Genocide in October 2006, the Turkish military announced the suspension of bilateral military relations with France, and protestors pelted the French embassy with rocks and eggs and hampered its operations for several weeks.

¶4. (SBU) Most contacts warn us, however, that the reaction to an

American genocide resolution will be far worse. Differences over Iraq aside, they tell us that the U.S.-Turkey relationship runs much deeper than Turkey-France ties, and that they expected negative messages from France which has raised barriers throughout Turkey's EU accession process. They anticipate that the Turkish people will react much more negatively and spontaneously to a resolution from the United States, forcing them to respond, especially in the current atmosphere of heightened nationalism. It is possible that significant Turkish contributions to our key foreign policy agenda items could be at risk, such as our air supply routes to Iraq, use of Incirlik Air Base for cargo hub and air refueling operations in support of coalition efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Turkey-Iraq border crossing at Habur for trucking fuel to coalition forces in Iraq and as a future port to retrograde US military equipment out of Iraq. Over half of US air cargo and 25% of fuel for Coalition troops in Iraq transits Turkey.

PKK

15. (SBU) The Kurdish terrorist organization PKK's safe-haven in northern Iraq is a continual irritant in U.S.-Turkey relations. Turkey has insisted since Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced in 2003 that the Iraqi government and/or the U.S. must take steps to address this terrorist organization's freedom of movement in Iraq.

16. (SBU) PKK terrorist attacks against Turkey from strongholds in northern Iraq killed 600 Turkish civilians and military in 2006 alone. A surge in PKK attacks last summer prompted the Turkish government to threaten a cross-border operation (CBO) into Iraq. To forestall this and to seek concrete actions to reduce PKK violence, the U.S. appointed Gen. (r) Joseph Ralston as Special Envoy for Countering PKK Terrorism in August 2006. The Turkish and Iraqi governments in turn named counterparts for Ralston: State Minister al-Waili for the GOI, and Gen. (r) Edip Baser for the GOT. Ralston has conducted numerous meetings with Iraqi and Turkish officials, most recently in late January.

17. (SBU) Although the Ralston initiative has gained us some time to address this problem, Turkey's leaders remain frustrated by the perceived lack of concrete results. With continued clashes between the Turkish military and the PKK throughout the winter and an expected increase in PKK attacks against military and civilian targets once the snows melt in the spring, the government and military will find themselves under increasing pressure to take unilateral action against PKK strongholds in northern Iraq.

Iraq and Kirkuk

18. (SBU) Turkey is concerned about growing instability in Iraq, increasing Iranian influence in the region, and the potential for the country to splinter along sectarian and/or ethnic lines. Turks worry that the U.S. is unable to control the violence in Baghdad, or to moderate Iraqi Kurdistan's ambitions to expand its territory, including to Kirkuk. The prospect of a referendum this year on the future status of Kirkuk exacerbates Turkish fears that a Kurdish annexation of the oil-rich province will lead to massive inter-communal violence and ultimately the dissolution of the country. Turkey also fears that KRG control of Kirkuk will lead to the creation of an independent Kurdish state, which is perceived as an existential threat to Turkey.

Iran

19. (SBU) Turkey has cultivated increasing economic ties with Iraq, and PM Erdogan has made four official visits to Tehran. Approximately 375,000 trucks and 90 percent of eastbound Turkish Airline flights cross Iranian territory annually on the way to Central Asia. More than a million Iranian tourists visit Turkey visa-free each year. And Tehran has attempted to put space between Washington and Ankara by cooperating with Turkey on the PKK.

110. (SBU) Despite this cooperation, Turkey remains distrustful of Iran's regional intentions and nuclear ambitions. Seeing growing Iranian influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories, Turkish officials and intellectuals have begun to speak

with concern of an Iranian-controlled Shia "arc of influence" from Turkmenistan to the Mediterranean. Turkey walks a cautious line on the Iranian nuclear issue. The GOT will follow UNSC resolutions, but will not get out in front of the international community on this matter.

WILSON